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SUBJECT: S/P'S ROSS, COHEN AND PATEL MEET WITH CONGOLESE
OFFICIALS TO DISCUSS INNOVATIVE APPROACHES IN THE
FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION AND SGBV

¶11. (SBU) Summary: The visit of Senior Advisor for Innovation, Alec Ross, to Kinshasa and Goma September 9-12, accompanied by Policy Planning staff Jared Cohen and Mira Patel, was an opportunity to advance progress on the new U.S. - DRC partnership following Secretary Clinton's August 10-11 visit. In meetings with the government, civil society, the private sector, humanitarian organizations and the international community, as well as site visits to displaced persons camps in eastern DRC, Ross explored how we might leverage the U.S. technology sector to support the DRC's development. Several proposed initiatives were discussed, with electronic payment systems for the military showing particular promise. Key to the success of any initiative will be ensuring sufficient U.S. resources while at the same time securing strong political commitment from the highest levels of the GDRC. All Kinshasa meetings took place on September 10. A message on the S/P visitors' meetings in Goma will follow septel. End summary.

Leveraging technology to address DRC's Challenges

¶12. (U) In an initial briefing with the ambassador, Cohen described his visit's objectives as advancing the Secretary's initiative for DRC by using technology as a tool for empowerment. Ross stressed that he was looking for measurable, achievable results-oriented projects in three focus areas: (1) leveraging technology to make vulnerable populations in eastern DRC, particularly women and children, less vulnerable. This could include, for example, providing vulnerable populations with real-time information on insecure areas; (2) increased access to the judicial system in remote, rural areas of eastern DRC by linking victims through video technology to magistrates in Kinshasa; and (3) using technology to stem the illegal trade of minerals in eastern DRC.

GDRC Meetings

¶13. (U) During a meeting with Minister of Mines Martin Kabwelulu, Ross highlighted his desire to learn about the DRC's mining sector and how the USG can encourage legal exploitation of the country's mineral wealth. Kabwelulu noted that the Secretary's visit showed that the DRC is becoming a country where the private sector can now do business: before, conflict had prevented real investment and decades of economic mismanagement under Mobuto had prevented true development of the country. Kabwelulu stated that major challenges for the DRC include both food security and changing the mentality of the population -- both important to ensure a strong work ethic. He lamented past exploitation projects in the mining sector, noting the revenues had not been used for the DRC's development. To ensure revenues from the mining sector now benefit the Congolese population, the GDRC, with technical assistance from the World Bank, drafted a new mining law in 2002. The GDRC also launched a review in 2007 of 61 contracts. Turning to the illegal minerals trade in the east, Kabwelulu said the GDRC had appointed a team to determine steps to stem illegal trade. A key part of GDRC efforts includes providing specialized services including "Centers for Negotiations" to support tractability through mechanisms such as uniform packaging. The GDRC has also reduced taxes on comptoirs to

encourage legal trade.

¶4. (SBU) Kabwelulu used the last part of the meeting to "send a message" to the USG on the contract renegotiation of Freeport-McMoRan's TFM project. Specifically, he complained that TFM's contract did not comply with DRC law, that the company was QTFM's contract did not comply with DRC law, that the company was "taking advantage" of their existing contract and that it does not provide Gecamines sufficient management control. There remain five points of disagreement between TFM and the GDRC; negotiations continue. Referring to concerns raised by the Secretary during her visit, Kabwelulu stated that the DRC had not accepted uranium, but did recognize the challenge of controlling the sector's exploitation given the large number of small-scale diggers. He requested U.S. assistance for improved surveillance.

¶5. (SBU) Comment: While Kabwelulu's comment on TFM was disappointing, particularly given the context of the meeting, it is hardly surprising- he has previously been a hurdle in the negotiations and is likely playing hardball during what he sees as a last chance effort to get a cut of the deal. Econ Counselor noted to Kabwelulu that while the negotiations were private--between the company and the government -- our concern has always been in ensuring a fair and transparent process and that the numerous delays in finalizing the revisit process sent a negative message to investors about the DRC. End comment.

¶6. (U) At his meeting with Adolphe Mulamu Mulenda, President Kabila's Chief of Staff, Ross outlined his trip objectives and possible initiatives and noted his desire for projects that support Kabila's "cinq chantiers" or priority sectors for development. Cohen added that the US private sector is looking for new partners. The USG is interested in linking the US private sector to support development in the DRC, with a particular focus on supporting

security and stability in eastern DRC. The Chief of Staff stated that the Secretary's visit came at a crossroads in the U.S.-DRC bilateral relationship and he requested additional details on how technology could be used to support our shared goals. Ross and Cohen outlined the three focus areas noted in para. 2, stressing that these are initial ideas and that coordination with the GDRC was key as we move toward any implementation. Ross highlighted the successful electronic payments systems implemented for military and police in Afghanistan as one example of leveraging new technology. Cohen also noted how technology had been used in the U.S. to make populations safer. Deputy Chief of Staff Henri Yav asked how technology could be used to support health and education -- two of Kabila's five priorities areas -- noting that both lack of access and infrastructure were key challenges in these sectors. Cohen noted the link between tele-justice and education and that there were many examples of successful telemedicine projects. Ross concluded the meeting by stressing the USG's sustained engagement and new relationship with both the GDRC and the private sector.

¶7. (U) Telecommunications and Postal Minister Louis Munga Mesozi noted a number of efforts to support the DRC's telecommunications infrastructure to increase access to services. These include several projects -- either planned or underway -- to connect the DRC to various existing fiber optic cable networks. Noting the low rates of ICT penetration in the DRC -- 15% for cellular and 1.8% for internet -- the minister welcomed Ross' proposals to engage the U.S. telecommunications sector.

Engaging with the Private Sector on Electronic Banking

¶8. (U) A roundtable discussion with the leading investors in the telecommunications sector -- Zain, Tigo and Vodacom -- highlighted electronic or mobile banking as a possible mechanism to support new salary payment systems for police and military as a means of reducing human rights violations, including SGBV, by security forces. The telecom reps voiced strong enthusiasm for electronic payment systems, noting that the Congolese Central Bank on electronic banking that would soon be submitted to Parliament. A current constraint has been that the current banking laws do not

address electronic banking. Vodacom noted that they planned to soon launch their MPass system in the DRC and were simply waiting for Central Bank authorization. Ross invited the telecommunications sector to work as partners with the USG on developing a payment system for soldiers' salaries, noting the USG can play a facilitator's role such as organizing a delegation of private sector leaders in mobile banking to visit the DRC. The telecom reps noted that while the eastern DRC was generally well covered in terms of cellular networks, a number of challenges exist. These include the DRC's difficult security and investment climate, limited infrastructure (in particular, electricity), and GDRC regulatory issues regarding the issuance of 3G licenses.

¶9. (U) Representatives from the banking sector, including Citigroup and Trust Merchant Bank, voiced less enthusiasm for mobile banking for soldiers salaries. One representative questioned why the GDRC had never discussed the concept with the banking sector if it was really a possible solution to salary payment issues. Other challenges noted by the banking sector included a lack of liquidity and need to develop cash-out systems. More generally, one banker Qand need to develop cash-out systems. More generally, one banker stated that mobile banking risked further marginalizing the DRC's fragile financial services sector. Ross and Cohen highlighted the successful Afghanistan model and offered to facilitate communication between the DRC banking sector and leaders in mobile banking such as the CEO of Roshan.

International Community Notes Challenges

¶10. (U) A lunch with donor ambassadors and heads of multilateral organizations highlighted many of the challenges to implementing effective new measures to address the DRC's challenges. SRSG Doss, for example, noted that SGBV extended well beyond the east and would take significant efforts to combat -- the international community is looking to reinforce existing programs. One key issue is creating greater control of and discipline within the FARDC. The DRC's large size and lack of infrastructure represent other key challenges for MONUC. MONUC is exploring how to better use existing surveillance centers so that they can prevent, not just react to, acts of violence. Other challenges raised by various donor Ambassadors echoed those of SRSG Doss -- lack of infrastructure and related mobility and absence of discipline with the FARDC. The issue of impunity was also raised as a challenge. There was broad consensus that ensuring payment of salaries to the FARDC was key to improving discipline and reducing human rights violations by the security forces. Participants also concurred on the importance of the changed regional dynamics -- in particular between Kinshasa and Kigali -- in promoting peace and security in eastern DRC. Finally, Ross asked about national Congolese figures who can play a positive

role in messaging on SGBV. Religious institutions -- above all the Catholic Church -- were described as important vehicles to reach more remote populations through existing communications networks.

¶11. (U) The last event in the visitors' busy schedule was an informal dinner with representatives of civil society, including UNICEF, ICRC, IRC, the Carter Center, the UNJRH (UN Joint Human Rights Office) and UNHCR. As with lunch earlier in the day, a number of concerns were raised regarding lack of infrastructure and the questionable commitment of the Congolese government to carry out meaningful reform. Discussions focused on using technology to bolster the criminal justice system, payment of soldiers and reducing the incidence of SGBV.

¶12. (U) Cable on the visitors' meetings in Goma will follow septel.

¶13. (U) Mr. Ross cleared/cleared on this message.

GARVELINK